



Natural Resources Conservation Service  
655 Parfet St., Rm E200C  
Lakewood, CO 80215

The logo for the Farm Service Agency (FSA) features a stylized graphic of three horizontal lines of increasing length, resembling a plow or a field, above the text "Farm Service Agency".

Farm Service Agency  
Farm Service Agency  
655 Parfet St., Rm E301  
Lakewood, CO 80215

## JOINT AGENCY ANNOUNCEMENT

- VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL -

**TO: All Colorado FSA Offices  
All Colorado NRCS Offices**

**DATE: May 22, 2009**

**SUBJECT: Announcement of 2009 Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)**

**ACTION REQUIRED BY: June 15, June 19 and June 29, 2009**

A cut-off date for GRP applications in Colorado has been established: **June 15, 2009**.

The Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) is a voluntary program offering landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance grasslands on their property. Section 2403 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Pub. L. 110-246) reauthorized GRP. The program emphasizes support for working grazing operations, enhancement of plant and animal biodiversity, and protection of grasslands that are under threat of conversion to cropping, urban development and other activities. Participants voluntarily limit future development of the land, while retaining the right to conduct common grazing practices and operations using rental contracts and conservation easements. Priority enrollment consideration will be given to Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts that are within 12 months of expiration.

GRP is jointly administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). (The USDA Forest Service also has a role in holding easements on land adjacent to National Forests, at its discretion.)

The program has two enrollment options; (1) permanent easements and (2) rental contracts with terms of 10-, 15-, or 20-year terms. Enrollment of eligible expiring CRP lands into GRP will be limited to perpetual easements or 20-year rental contracts.

NRCS coordinates most of the "front-end" program administration, including the technical aspects of application evaluation and ranking. NRCS administers and manages the easements. FSA manages the program funds and administers the rental contracts, once they have been selected for funding. Applications for rental contracts become contracts once both the landowner(s) and the local FSA County Committee have signed a CCC-920 GRP Contract. A rental contract consists of the following:

- CCC-920 GRP Contract;
- CCC-920 GRP Contract Appendix;

- A grazing management plan (prepared by NRCS in consultation with the landowner(s);
- A baseline report prepared by NRCS and acknowledged by the landowner(s) to document conditions on the property at the time the contract is made;
- SF-1199A, Direct Deposit Sign-Up Form

NRCS field offices will screen the applications and score those that pass the screen (to be distributed next week). All applications are to be sent to the applicable Area Resource Conservationist for Programs (ARCP) no later than June 19.

Highly ranked applications will be selected for a second round of scoring that will be field-based and performed by one or more NRCS technical teams. The teams will consist of at least one range conservationist and one biologist. The fully scored and vetted applications will be sent to Gary Finstad no later than June 29. That date is critical, as the national office has established a July 1 deadline for us to assess our ranked applications and to submit a report on pending projects with cost-estimates.

Key implementation features of the FY 2009 Grassland Reserve Program (GRP):

- GRP uses a continuous sign-up, so applications received after the cut-off date will be accepted and considered for funding in the next funding cycle.
- Applications may be received by either agency, but they must all be routed to NRCS for processing.
- Until the revised NRCS-CPA-1200 becomes available, applications can be accepted using form AD-1153. **CAUTION:** The form is out-of-date, as it includes references to “30-year contracts” and “30-year easements.” Neither of these enrollment options are available now, per the 2008 Farm Bill.
- FSA is awaiting guidance regarding their role in GRP administration, including the loading of application information into their system.
- Final award selections will be jointly made by the Colorado NRCS State Conservationist and the Colorado FSA State Executive Director.
- All payments will be made through FSA.

The 2008 Farm Bill changed the easement compensation method for easements. A landowner will be compensated based on the lowest of three values:

- 1) the fair market value of the offered acres encumbered by the easement;
- 2) the Geographic Area Cap;
- 3) the landowner offer.

Colorado has been approved to use the following values for easement compensation for FY09:

- 1) **\$480** per acre for the average fair market value of land encumbered by the easement;
- and 2) **\$350** per acre for the Geographic Area Cap. This means that we will pay \$350 per acre for an easement, unless a landowner voluntarily offers to take less. These values apply to the entire state.

Rental Contracts receive annual compensation (at the end of each contract year) based on 75% of the county’s per acre rental rate for grazing, as established by FSA.

This announcement also transmits the following items to support program roll-out and application processing:

1. Grassland Reserve Program Fact Sheet-Key Points
2. Draft press release that can be adapted for local newspapers and newsletters
3. Letter template of notification for applicants submitting previously considered applications.
4. The new GRP Conservation Easement Deed
5. FY2009 GRP Landowner Offer Sheet

The 2009 screening/ranking tool will be distributed on Tuesday, May 26.

When applications have been selected for funding, NRCS field staff will work with the landowners to ensure a grazing management plan is in place for the offered acres, as well as to complete a baseline report that will document site conditions at the time an easement is conveyed or a rental contract is made.

The Colorado Grassland Reserve Program contacts for Colorado are:

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS):

Gary Finstad, Easements Coordinator, Lakewood, CO  
(Lorenz Sutherland, ARCP, La Junta, CO will serve as a back-up for Gary)  
Tim Carney, Assistant State Conservationist-Programs, Lakewood, CO

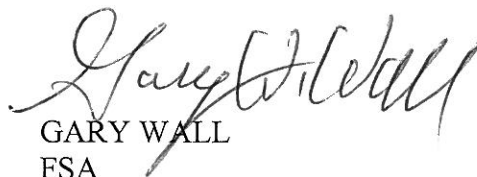
Farm Services Agency (FSA):

Billie Merritt, Conservation Program Specialist, Lakewood, CO

If you have questions, please contact them.



ALLEN GREEN  
NRCS  
State Conservationist



GARY WALL  
FSA  
Acting State Executive Director

Attachments (5)

cc: Tim Carney, ASTC-P, NRCS, Lakewood, CO  
Gary Wall, FSA, Lakewood, CO  
Billie Merrit, FSA, Lakewood, CO